



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Having Healthy Babies

Inpatient Hospitalization Costs Associated with Birth Defects Among Persons of All Ages — United States, 2013

Recorded: January 17, 2017; posted: January 19, 2017

[Announcer] *This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Latoya Simmons] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm Latoya Simmons, filling in for your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Most babies in the United States are born perfectly healthy. However, a small percentage are born with birth defects, and these conditions account for one of every five infant deaths in the United States.

Dr. Sarah Tinker is a researcher with CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities. She's joining us today to discuss ways for women to improve their chances of having a healthy baby. Welcome to the show, Sarah.

[Dr. Tinker] Thank you for having me.

[Latoya Simmons] Sarah, how many children in the U.S. are born with birth defects each year?

[Dr. Tinker] Nearly 120,000 babies are affected by birth defects each year; that's one out of every 33 babies born.

[Latoya Simmons] What are the most common birth defects?

[Dr. Tinker] Congenital heart defects are the most common type of birth defect, affecting about 40,000 births. Other common birth defects are cleft lip and cleft palate, Down syndrome, and neural tube defects, including spina bifida.

[Latoya Simmons] Do we know what causes birth defects?

[Dr. Tinker] For most birth defects, we don't know what causes them. It's likely a complex mix of factors, including our genes, our behaviors, and things in our environment. However, we've learned a lot through research about things that might affect the *risk* for birth defects.

[Latoya Simmons] How can a woman improve her chances of preventing a birth defect in her baby?

[Dr. Tinker] To improve the chances of having a baby without a birth defect, women should plan ahead and get as healthy as they can *before* they get pregnant. About half of pregnancies in the U.S. are not planned, so all women who are capable of getting pregnant should consume folic acid every day. Women planning pregnancy should discuss all the medicines that they're taking

with their health care provider and work to get chronic conditions under control before pregnancy, particularly diabetes and obesity. It's also important for pregnant women to avoid harmful substances, like tobacco and alcohol.

[Latoya Simmons] Sarah, where can listeners get more information about preventing birth defects?

[Dr. Tinker] Listeners can go to cdc.gov/birthdefects.

[Latoya Simmons] Thanks, Sarah. I've been talking today with Dr. Sarah Tinker about ways to decrease the risk for birth defects in newborns. Before and during pregnancy, consume folic acid, avoid alcohol and tobacco, maintain a healthy weight, and regularly visit a health care provider to reduce the risk of birth defects.

Until next time, be well. This is Latoya Simmons for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.